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Your help is asked for extending coverage of the revised Foreign Service Act to the spouses of CIA personnel. Provisions also need to be made for establishing minimum subsistence benefits for spouses divorced or widowed.

Many of these women have served loyally (to date, most dependent spouses are women) in a succession of overseas assignments through as many as 30 and 40 years of married life. Yet CIA spouses are not covered by the new Foreign Service Act or by the acts now being prepared by Colorado Congresswoman Patricia Shroeder for the wives of Military and Civil Service personnel or by the Income Protection Act of Senator Packwood of Oregon.

In their years of support to the CIA mission, these dependents worked hard in foreign countries to establish environments in which operations could be expeditiously and effectively conducted. They cooperated loyally in security requirements, ensuring the cooperation of household members. They guarded the health and, in many cases, the morale of the staff officers to whom they were married. They fulfilled the many duties required by their spouses' cover assignments--tasks that could and frequently did add up to a 40-hour work week. In many cases, CIA dependents provided clerical and operational support--usually unpaid--with such efficiency that personnel requirements abroad were kept to a minimum.

For the CIA employees, they provided extra contacts with the local scene. They learned the local mores as they worked to establish and maintain new homes. They helped to build working relationships with the local citizens and third-country nationals in

whom their spouses were interested. The friendships they made with local wives translated into freer communication for CIA personnel with their local male contacts.

At the same time, these CIA dependents found--like other Foreign Service dependents--that they could not maintain careers of their own because the laws of the host countries prohibited placing foreigners in jobs that could be held by local citizens. The CIA dependents discovered also that the frequent moves--often to less developed countries--eliminated any chance of building their own careers. Security requirements and cover assignments inappropriate to outside employment posed other restrictions.

The number of former spouses of CIA personnel who would benefit from corrective legislation is unknown. But it would seem that spouses of CIA personnel face unique risks of divorce and resulting financial insecurity. An argument can be made that marriages to CIA staff members founder because job-related secrecy leads to breakdowns in communication between husband and wife and subsequent estrangement. The use of alcohol as an instrument of interrogation can lead to abuse, spurred by the stresses of years of constant change, of hazardous operational assignments.

The spouse of a CIA officer faces stresses and carries responsibilities unique to CIA service: not only must her household be moved frequently, but changing cover assignments mean that she must learn and undertake new duties with each new tour to add to the already heavy load of responsibilities she carries from the position of the CIA staff member.

Often the countries of interest to intelligence professionals are the countries in turmoil--small, backward countries attempting too-rapid entry into the modern world. As a result, the CIA wife frequently finds herself at small stations that can mean difficult--even hazardous--living for American families. Her spouse can be away for long periods--on unknown, possibly dangerous, assignments. She is left to cope alone with family problems, many of which she is encountering for the first time. Often, she is outside the official diplomatic family. Even if they are available, she may be unable to use peer or official support systems because of the requirements for secrecy.

The CIA spouse finds her financial security threatened when returning to a stateside divorce court, she again is handicapped by the rules of secrecy in telling details of why a divorce has become necessary. She is loyal and trained to be discreet. But she knows too that the family income is unprotected by Civil Service regulations, should she breach security requirements. Some wives have been left to fend for themselves--without any financial support--because the real problems with the marriage could not be brought out in court.

Once divorced, the former CIA spouse often finds that she must care for her children alone, as her former husband departs again for foreign assignment. She and her children find that stateside culture is strange and uncomfortable after their years abroad. The family stress is especially painful because it is unexpected. While all her children are affected, the situation is

most painful for teenagers for whom peer acceptance is everything; emotional damage can be lasting.

The divorced spouse must cope also with increased expenses--the result of inflation, the lack of cost-of-living allowances, and the withdrawal of medical coverage--at the time her share of the family income is being drastically reduced. This, despite the fact that the ills--physical and emotional--were aggravated or incurred abroad.

If the divorced spouse attempts to enter the job market, she finds her age and lack of marketable skills handicapping. Any training she once had is many years outdated. She is too old for the training programs that offer upward career mobility.

Her years of service to her country earn her no special consideration for government employment. If she is fortunate enough to secure an entry-level government job, her job placement will be too low, her years of working too few to earn even a subsistence retirement. She will be unable to collect the Social Security benefits earned during her marriage in her husband's name if she collects the Civil Service retirement benefits she earns herself. Implementation of the proposed delays and reductions in government retirement benefits can be expected only to further diminish her chances for an adequate retirement income.